

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,  
Herancourt Furniture Company Factory  
1100 Elm Street  
Dubuque  
Dubuque County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-AW

HABS  
IOWA,  
31-DUBU,  
13-AW-

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**PHOTOGRAPHS  
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver Colorado 80225

## Herancourt Furniture Company Factory

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IOWA,  
31 - DUBU,  
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Site Location: 1100 Elm Street  
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa  
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 8.38  
Cadastral grid : NE1/4 SE1/4 S24 T89N R2E  
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'  
Lot description: Subdivision of Lots 1-3  
of City Lot 505

Present Owner: Iowa Department of Transportation  
Present Usage: vacant  
Present Condition : poor / fair

Orientation : south  
Architectural Description :  
Plan type : rectangular, three-story open-space factory,  
with 2-story addition on west and small  
one-story addition on north side.  
Foundation: stone perimeter walls on main block; poured-in-  
place concrete on addition.  
Structure : wood frame with masonry bearing walls.  
Ext. walls: common red brick laid in common bond.  
Roofs : flat composition roofs with brick parapet  
walls.  
Chimneys : all original chimneys removed.  
Windows : painted wood 12/12 double-hung windows on orig-  
inal block, with plain casings, slip sills, and  
segmental brick arch heads; 12/12 double-hung  
windows with plain casings, lug sills and loose  
lintels on main block addition. In the fourth  
and fifth bays of the third story the windows  
are 8/8 double hung. In the first three bays  
of this wall the windows are 16/16 double hung.  
Unless otherwise indicated all the windows of  
this block have plain casings and lug sills  
made of headers. On the most recently built  
block, each window is larger and more squat  
than those of the older sections. On the top  
story, most of the windows have one large fixed  
light, except for two upper story windows on  
the south wall, which are made of fixed glass  
blocks. These same glass block windows are  
seen on the first story of the west wall.  
Openings : single-leaf office entrance with glass block  
sidelights on west wall of addition; sectional

garage door and single-leaf door on south wall of addition; sectional door on south wall of main block; four-leaf door with iron l-beam lintel on north wall of main block. Each leaf has a 16-light window and diagonal planking in the panels below.

Porches : metal awning cantilevered from wall over Elm Street entrance; exterior steel stair to 2nd floor on north wall of addition.

Details : modestly corbeled brick cornice on main block; JACOBSON STEEL & SUPPLY CO. painted in a band under the cornice on Eleventh and Elm street walls.

Construction Date : c.1860; 1922; c.1950

Architecture Style: 19th Century Functional

Physical History : Born in Germany in 1921, Valentine Herancourt immigrated to the United States in 1837; he moved to Dubuque from Ohio in 1845. Herancourt founded a furniture manufacturing company in the city the next year. Beginning modestly in a shop on Main Street, the business grew until he constructed a large stone factory on the corner of Eleventh and Elm streets. Herancourt maintained the Main Street office as a retail outlet and expanded the factory incrementally. Painting and finishing departments were added within a few years and the lumber yards expanded to cover a half-block area. At the time of Herancourt's death in 1867, the plant employed some 45 men with an aggregate weekly payroll of \$250. "Every improvement that experience and an intimate knowledge of the trade can suggest has been made," a Dubuque history stated, "new machinery introduced, and the business annually turns out a large variety and immense quantity of work."

Herancourt's widow and two sons operated the firm after his death, selling it thirteen years later to Herman Mauer, president of the Key City Furniture Company. Incorporated in February 1880 with capitalization of \$100,000, Key City continued furniture and cabinet production in the factory. A 1911 gazetteer reported: "The office and factory building occupy a commodious building, which covers ground space two hundred by two hundred feet, and contains forty thousand square feet divided by four floors. Sixty skilled mechanics are employed here representing a big salary and wage expense." The company produced domestic furniture, store fixtures, cigar cases, cabinets, counters, showcases and wood storefronts, with an annual production of \$75,000. Key City reorganized in 1919 as the Hawkeye Casket Company, continuing operations here until about 1938. After a period of vacancy in the early 1940s, the factory was occupied by the Jacobson Iron and Metal Company, which was later renamed the Jacobson Steel and Supply Company.

The existing building is an agglomeration of at least three structures, built in different stages. The oldest remaining section of the building is the rear three-story portion of the main block, probably Herancourt's painting and finishing addition, built c.1860. The front 3- and 4-story portion of the main block dates was built in 1922 for the reported cost of \$20,000. The last addition - the two-story wing on the west - appears to date from about 1950. No longer used, the building has recently been acquired by the Iowa Department of Transportation for demolition.

**Significance:** Reportedly the first furniture manufacturing plant opened in Dubuque, the Herancourt Furniture Company Factory is an important early representative of the burgeoning woodworking industry in the city. Its numerous alterations and additions, however, have compromised the structure's historical and architectural value.

**References:** Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.  
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H.W. Gardner, *Greater Dubuque* (Dubuque: Times Journal, 1911), pages 17, 66.  
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